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Strengthening Public Health Institutes in Low and Middle Income Countries

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Developing a Framework for Analysis of Project Activities

Background

The European Union aims at strengthening research in partner countries for improved policy development in health. Eight projects were selected in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, strengthening Public Health Institutes or similar organisations for a period of five years (2015 - 2020). The European Commission created an independent Monitoring Facility to accompany the eight projects, stimulating mutual learning and development of best practices.

Aims

The Monitoring Facility analysed the eight projects in order to identify critical project elements. This analysis allows for systematic monitoring and feedback with regard to the objective of contributing to national policy development in health.

Methods

The Monitoring Facility used three theoretical frameworks for analysis, i.e. the Logical Framework, the Results Oriented Monitoring and the Theory of Change, to identify critical project elements.

Results

The researchers identified three sets of critical project elements: *strengthening institutes*, *improving products* of those institutes, and *intensifying dialogue* between researchers and policy makers. Under *strengthening institutes* the project elements of capacity building of individual staff members, organisational strengthening and institutional development were found; under *improving products*, the project elements of research activities, training of health workforce and service delivery in medical and laboratory services were identified; under *intensifying dialogue* the project elements of research communication, advocacy, and creation of platforms and networks were identified.

Projects show a wide variation in planned investments in *strengthening institutes*, *improving products* or *intensifying dialogue*, based on their own needs assessment. The Monitoring Facility's first analysis already identified in projects weaknesses and imbalances that have to be addressed in order to be successful in contributing to policy development.

Conclusion

Systematic monitoring, feedback and mutual learning among eight projects for strengthening public health institutes will create a unique opportunity for joint development of best practices in local research that will inform health policy makers in low- and middle-income countries. This programme will show the added value of local research for national health policy in addition to policy advice from global and overseas institutions.